DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 914 CG 013 705

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TITLE An Intervention Program for Occupational Stereotyping by Deaf Students.
PUB DATE 28 Mar 78
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors (62nd, Detroit, Michigan, March 28-April 1, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aurally Handicapped; *Deaf Education; *Educational Resources; Employment Opportunities; *Instructional Materials; *Intervention; Labeling (of Persons); *Occupational Aspiration; Self Actualization; Sex Discrimination; Teacher Developed Materials

ABSTRACT

A number of studies of deaf adolescents, deaf college students and deaf females have shown that stereotyped aspirations and notions of sex-typed occupational roles are typical of deaf subjects. Deafness, like gender, represents a handicap for holding certain jobs. Societal pressure to fit the doubly stereotyped occupational roles mandated by their sex and their hearing impairment has resulted in channeling of individuals into inappropriate rigid and/or limited career choices. A paradigm for the production of materials and strategies to intervene in the process of occupational stereotyping is described. Four channels of learning are presented as the philosophical context for a career education program: (1) the self, (2) the conceptual, (3) the informational, and (4) the experiential (Munson, 1971). Suggestions for the design of materials and strategies under each of the four input modes which specifically address the societal values related to sex and deafness, are offered for program coordinators, teachers and counselors. (Author)

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ED174914

An Intervention Program for Occupational Stereotyping by Deaf Students

by

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CG013705

Presented at: National Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors: 62nd Conference: Detroit, Michigan
March 28-April 1, 1978

Submitted for publication to: ERIC, Counseling and Personnel Services Information Center, University of Michigan
May 1979

An Intervention Program
Occupational Stereotyping by Deaf Students

The handicapped face many barriers to successful career development in science and technology, most notably the lack of role models, deprivation of science content in their schooling, and discrimination based on negative societal expectations and personal aspirations. Deaf students must face all these and overcome the additional burden of a communication barrier.

There is abundant evidence of highly consensual norms and perceptions regarding males and females. The stereotypes attributed to men and boys are perceived to be more socially desirable and more advantageous to a person seeking a niche in the world-of-work of a scientific environment.

Many occupations in the United States have traditionally been divided according to sex, "men's work" versus "women's work." Although men and women have recently entered fields where fewer than thirty percent of the jobs were held by someone of their respective sex, many technical and scientific occupations still remain dominated by one sex. Deafness, like sex, represents a characteristic regarded by society as a handicap for holding certain jobs.

Hearing-impaired students suffer not only the same curriculum deprivations that perpetuate stereotyping of occupations as their hearing peers, but they have also not had career education exposures which have been planned and implemented with their particular type of handicap in mind (Munson and Egelston, 1974). Junior high school-aged deaf adolescents and reportedly three times more likely to stereotype occupations by sex than are their hearing peers (Egelston and Kovolchuk, 1976). If an individual feels that a particular job is inappropriate for his or sex, that occupation is as good as closed, because he or she will not aspire to that job as a personally-potential occupation.

Not only are deaf workers found in disproportionately large numbers among low paying, low status, dead-end jobs, but the majority of deaf students at both Gallaudet College and National Technical Institute for the Deaf are enrolled in programs traditionally appropriate for their sexual identity (Cook and Rossett, 1975). Both distributions show the effect of self-selection and aspiration based on traditional stereotyped notions of what deaf men or deaf women can do. Deaf adolescent women reportedly have a more traditional view of their sex role as manifested in vocational choices than do their hearing peers.

Freshman at National Technical Institute for the Deaf rated jobs 1) as appropriate for males only, females only, or both; and 2) as appropriate for only hearing workers, only deaf workers, or both. Correlation analyses showed males tended to stereotype jobs by sex more than females, as expected since most of the technological majors represent pioneer choices for women. The strongest correlation ($p < .001$) revealed that students who stereotyped jobs by sex also regarded deafness as a limiting handicap (Egelston-Dodd, 1977).

Intervention in these beliefs through science career planning seminars targeted at secondary school age deaf students could liberate their personnel aspirations from the stereotypes of sex and deafness. A program for educators of the deaf which serves to raise their awareness of the detrimental effects of such channeling has its precedent in hearing schools where a deliberate attempt to overturn societal values and eradicate racism and sexism has resulted in response to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Such a plan in schools or vocational programs for the deaf, where stereotyping is even more rigid, has never been undertaken. It is past due.

For deaf people the effect of societal pressure to fit the doubly stereotyped occupational roles mandated by their sex and their hearing impairment is abundantly evident. The channeling of deaf males into machine or printing trades and of deaf females into keypunch operation or domestic duties is one result of the failure of schools and rehabilitative social and vocational services for the deaf to counteract the effects of this stereotyping.

The need for materials and strategies for a science career education effort which counteracts sexism and other discriminatory societal influences has been documented by Dr. Joanne Stolte, director of the NSF project, Science Career Development for the Deaf (1977). Deaf scientists, particularly females, are not readily available as role models. Schooling for the deaf, even through secondary level, emphasizes language development to the exclusion of science content. The business community views with pessimism the difficulty, inconvenience and expense of communicating through an interpreter, learning manual communication and installation of teletype equipment to serve as telephone substitutes for potential deaf employees. The infeasibility and risk of a hearing handicapped person working with science equipment has been cited as rationale for the low participation of the deaf in careers in science and technology. The Philadelphia-based project proposes to provide successful role models, enhanced science content and positive expectations for career development in science in the hopes of stimulating scientific aspirations in secondary deaf students.

In light of such current development efforts, the design of a paradigm or philosophical context for the production of materials and strategies seems timely.

At a symposium entitled Research and Utilization of Educational Media for Teaching the Deaf, held in Nebraska in 1973, which focused in career education and innovative career and vocational learning activities, it was repeatedly shown that materials that work well with hearing students do not meet the needs of deaf students. Although they can be modified (captioned, edited, etc.) they do not offer the exposures and experiences which are essential in the education of deaf students. Rarely treated in sufficient detail are the kinds of work problems and attitudes which deaf workers encounter in the safety regulations, communications and human relations aspects of a job.

Munson and Egelston (1974) have reported a career education model which has been explicitly developed for intermediate and secondary level deaf students. The CREED model was explored as part of an action research and demonstration project in three New York State schools for the deaf. This project has resulted in the preparation of a program for meeting the specific career education needs of deaf students.

There are several general trends in the American job market which will combine nicely with structured and frequent career education experiences for deaf students and bring "pay off" in eventual human marketability. The major occupational trends that affect the employment of American people include 1) automation and the replacement of low-level, routine jobs by those requiring a high level of education and training, 2) technological developments which require sophisticated knowledge and skills, and 3) a growing realm of sub-professionals who perform the less complex tasks formerly carried out by doctors, nurses, teachers, counselors and others.

A number of recent developments represent changes which impact fortuitously on science career development for the deaf. These positive developments include 1) the tremendous success achieved by the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in providing skills and opportunities in many technical fields which were previously closed to the deaf, 2) public understanding of the deaf and their problems which has increased significantly during the past few years due to television, anti-discrimination legislation aimed at all minorities, and a growing national concern for making all handicapped fully participating members of American society, and 3) career education which is rapidly becoming a major component of the total educational process in our schools.

In order for these developments to augment the science career potential of secondary deaf learners, there must be a firm grasp of the theoretical framework underpinning the career education movement. Egelston-Dodd (1977) has summarized the field as revolving around four positions. On a narrow-to-broad continuum the first concept represents only the economic role of career education. Another position widely covered in the

professional literature is the specific training required in the preparation for a job or some paid employment. The third conceptualization which is most compatible with an intervention program such as the one described in this paper, includes employability and occupational education but is not limited to the economic or work role. This position defines career education as a comprehensive self-development and career decision-making process approach. This concept evolves into position four, a life-time career development approach with the intent being an eventual provision for a total life-span tied to career development.

As we begin to view science career development in its broader, more encompassing dimensions, we are better able to accept it as vital for human maturation and intellectual development. Recent research on self esteem and self concept has suggested that children who have a positive self concept tend to achieve more. In the science education of deaf learners we should be able to keep in perspective the disability caused by hearing impairment and highlight the identification and development of each student's individual attributes and skills.

A science career education program can be infused into the existing secondary curriculum offerings using these four basic channels: 1) the self, 2) the conceptual, 3) the informational, and 4) the experiential (Munson, 1971). Briefly each of these can be differentiated as follows: Self exposures focus on the individual and his or her "being" and deal with the many component concepts of self that comprise the total self concept of the individual. Activities can be designed to provide deaf students with opportunities to explore their values, attitudes, abilities, aspirations, personally held stereotypes, and personal traits from the perspectives of their sex and the limits of their hearing handicap. Science classes represent an appropriate medium for teaching the analytic skills involved in such self evaluation (R. Egelston and J. Egelston, 1973).

Conceptual exposures contribute to the individual's general understanding of the nature of work, work functions and work roles, and also emphasize the development of attitudes and understandings that permit an individual to think abstractly about the role of work in their lives. Language serves an important function in conceptual learning. Deaf students need to understand the special vocabulary associated with the work function concepts. This vocabulary can be infused into instructional content units where the terms would be appropriately studied as part of the regular academic curriculum. Such work function terminology as negotiating, computing, and analyzing are already a part of typical science classroom experiences. Conceptualization of the tasks involved in a work situation may occur with repeated exposures and teacher guidance.

Informational exposures provide for input of a factual nature and deal basically with expanding students' knowledge about specific science-related jobs and career opportunities in the world of technical and scientific occupations. The informational channel must provide the very special information about job duties, work requirements and qualifications so that an individual has the needed knowledge for problem-solving and decision-making activities associated with his or her career development. Students cannot be exposed to all the career information which they may eventually need. They can learn how to locate information about the general duties of a job, typical work situations, the physical demands and conditions of an occupation, the personal qualifications and preparation requirements. Because the informational channel has a much stronger tradition in guidance and education in general, this material must be examined carefully for the stereotypes which could limit full career development in science. The failure to illustrate a mixture of males and females or handicapped and non-handicapped workers in the literature depicting a scientific career is a potent message to the reader which will impact on career decision-making. Teacher intervention involves bringing live role models of deaf workers of both sexes to the science classroom to serve as a direct source of career information, when they are available. If not, use of media which show an appropriate mixture of workers will help break the stereotypes.

Experiential exposures permit individuals to evaluate their feelings toward and skills in specific science-related jobs or work role relationships. This potent channel is rarely tapped in the typical science education program. Labor legislation has increasingly excluded the young from these real exposures, and economic conditions have limited part-time and summer work opportunities in any field. Although actual work provides real experience, life-like experiences of a simulated nature can be planned. Other strategies which can be employed to provide deaf students with experience in the actual dynamics of work include field trips to work sites, classroom and laboratory work, and homework assignments. In school deaf learners engage in work functions associated with data, people, and things. Schoolwork demands are real, and an individual's experience with these tasks, with the demands and pressures of completing these tasks and with the nature of the conditions in which the tasks must be accomplished, can be converted into meaningful experiential learning. Science teacher sensitivity to stereotypes regarding what deaf males and deaf females "can't" or "shouldn't" do must be displayed in the assignment of tasks so that engineering and physical science work doesn't go exclusively to the boys and record keeping or lab technician chores wind up assigned to the girls.

Women and especially deaf women (Connor and Rosenstein, 1963), are very aware of and sensitive to societal expectations. Therefore, another application demanded of any endeavor to enhance science career education is a model which works to undermine the stereotyping of jobs, interests

and abilities according to rigid ideas of the limits imposed by sex or by possession of a handicap. Adherence to the guidelines established by the NEA's recommendation for the elimination of sexism in curriculum materials is mandatory for the content, illustrations, language and philosophical base of any such program.

Finally, all of these changes depend on the positive and unlimiting attitudes of educators of the deaf toward sex roles and the handicap of deafness. Strategies for freeing educators of culturally derived biases have been developed for the hearing population through HEW sponsored programs. Infusing such strategies into the pre-service and in-service training of educators of the deaf can raise their awareness of the oppressive effects of stereotyping and demonstrate positive models of teaching behavior, counseling techniques and school policies which can intervene in sex-role stereotyping.

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